

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ויאמר אני אעביר כל טובי על פניך וקראתי בשם ה' לפניך והנתי את אשר אחז ורחמתי את אשר ארחם ... (לג-ל) (א-ג)

On December 25, 2023, two Israeli soldiers were killed r"l while fighting in the Gaza Strip. Sgt. First Class Yosef Gitarts and Staff Sgt. Elisha Yehonatan Lober. Gitarts lived in Tel Aviv, Lober in Yitzhar. Side-by-side photos of the faces of two soldiers graced numerous social media sites and looked out from the front pages of every newspaper the next day. What stood out most in Gitarts' photo is his green beret; in Lober's, it is his white *kippah* and long, curly *peyos*. Gitarts was born in Russia and immigrated to Israel at the age of 13; Lober was born in Beit El, son of actor and playwright Chagai Lober, director of the Aspaklaria theater. Gitarts was a second-year computer science student at Reichman University; Lober learned *Torah* at the *Roel Yisrael Yeshivah* in Yitzhar and was a youth coordinator in the community. Gitarts was single, Lober was married with a 10-month-old baby. A look at the photos of the two, and a superficial glance at their biographical sketches, paints a picture of two different Israels: what someone pre-October 7 might have referred to as the "State of Tel Aviv vs Judea." Yet they both died battling an enemy who sees absolutely no difference between the two and wants to rid the world of both.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog later addressed this in a speech to the nation, saying that Israel must not return to the poisonous disunity that existed before October 7. "We must not return to the discourse of 'us and them'," he said. Gitarts and Lober's pictures side-by-side show that in war, there is no "us" and "them." Yehonatan's father, Chagai, also appealed in a Facebook post for a day of unity to honor his son. "We request of the media and of every one of our nation: please, one day of unity to uplift his soul, please don't write or broadcast anything divisive, please, speak good [of others], find the good of the decision-makers and of our amazing people who Yehonatan was proud to fight for."

Chagai then told over the following story. A number of weeks after Yehonatan's death, I met with Brothers in Arms [a left-wing protest-movement for secular IDF reservists] out of a common concern for Jewish and Israeli unity. It was a meaningful encounter. We listened to one another, and even came to some tentative understandings on various issues.

After two hours I told them I had to leave and hurried to exit. They wanted to know what my hurry was and I told them I needed to pray and say *Kaddish* for Yehonatan. "What's the problem?" said the brothers, "You can say it here." Here??

"What do you need to say *Kaddish*?" they wanted to know. They truly had no idea what it means to pray.

I explained, "Ten people ... Ten men."

They immediately did a mass recruitment in their offices and wouldn't you know it - more than ten men showed up.

"Okay, what do we do now?" they asked.

"Well, you'll need to cover your heads out of respect," I told them, hoping this wouldn't cause them to change their minds.

So they all stood up and covered their heads with sweatshirt hoods, handkerchiefs, and position papers. They were happy to do it and used any and all means to prepare for the prayer.

"Look," I told them, "we'll need your cooperation in order to pray. You'll need to answer *Amen*."

"For sure!" they all chimed in. "When do we say *Amen*?" It was amazing that they truly had no idea.

"Umm... it's hard to explain..." I told them. "You know what? Every time I raise my hand, you say *Amen*. Cool?"

They all nodded and so I stood, a religious settler, "extreme right-winger", in the heart of "them" - the left-wingers, and prayed with them. I said *Kaddish* and the *Amida* and I raised my hand in the right places and they, more obedient than they've ever been before, roared out *Amen* like *Breslovers* in Uman on *Rosh Hashana*, every time I raised my hand.

I finished the prayer and told them, "I think that for Yehonatan up there, that was his sweetest *Kaddish* ever."

Much has been discussed about how the horror of October 7 unified the country - but how inevitably, as time passes, that unity will fade. But it doesn't have to. *Acheinu Kol Bais Yisroel ... we are all one big and hopefully happy family!*

תורת הצבי על הפטרות A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN

Similar to *Klal Yisroel's* fall with the *Egel Hazahav*, King Achav and the wicked Queen Izevel led their kingdom astray while *Eliyahu HaNavi* tried desperately to encourage *Bnei Yisroel* to recognize the folly of their ways. The *Navi* beseeches the people saying, "How long will you keep hopping between two opinions? If Hashem is the eternal G-d, then follow Him, and if Baal is it, then follow Baal!" But, in truth, was *Eliyahu* giving the Nation a choice?

The **Chafetz Chaim, R' Yisroel Meir HaKohen Kagan zt"l** says that the words of *Eliyahu HaNavi* teach us a tremendous lesson in *Avodas Hashem* and how a Jew should never compromise with those who have gone astray. Either a person believes in *Hashem*, or he does not. There are no

other opinions. He explains that in those times, people were led to believe that they can be good Jews who serve the Almighty, but when they needed further answers or clarifications, they could simply ask an alternate power.

While *Eliyahu HaNavi* was compassionate to the confusion of the Jewish people, he still needed to set the basic ground rules of being a true *Torah* Jew. This is the reason why *Eliyahu HaNavi* gave the people two clear choices: either follow *Hashem* or not. If the people choose to serve *Hashem*, then all is well; but if they choose to serve the *Baal* then their position is clear - they have separated themselves from the "עדת ישראל" - the congregation of *Klal Yisroel*. A Jew cannot believe in *Hashem* and also serve idols.

מר דודר המש מאות וקנמן בשם מחציתו המשיע ומאתים וקנה בשם המשיע ומאתים ... (לג-ל) (א-ג)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPMAN ZT"l

מחשבת הלב

When listing the required measurements for the components of the "שמן המשחה" - the anointing oil, the cinnamon had to be brought in two parts; each part weighing the equivalent of 250 *shekalim* - a total of 500 *shekalim*. What is the reason for this exact measurement? **Rashi** explains it was a, "גזרת הכתוב להביאו לחצאין להרבות בו ב' הכרעות, שאין שוקלץ עין בעין," - "a decree to bring it in halves to add to it two overweights, because we do not weigh [the spices] exactly." Weighing it twice would end up giving somewhat more to *hekdesh*, as we add a bit to each weighing to ensure *hekdesh* not be shortchanged. What may be the deeper message the *Torah* wants to convey here?

R' Shraga Grossbard zt"l offered two possible thoughts. The first is that although this added bit of cinnamon wasn't a very significant amount and didn't add much, nevertheless, it was still required. This teaches us that every little bit we disburse on *Hashem's* behalf is precious and regardless of its insignificance, it is cherished. The second thought is a deeper *machshava* in *Avodas Hashem* and life in general. A person must be consistent in his respective beliefs, outlook and actions. There shouldn't be too many contradictions. "הכרעה" means after strong consideration and a serious "שיקול הדעת" weighing the different options, you reach a conclusion. That *maskana* should be the one used to pave your way through your spiritual navigation and life's challenges.

Perhaps we can add another *machshava* here to explain why it was "מחציתו" - brought in halves. In *Yiddishkeit*, it's not about all or nothing - either 100% or don't bother. The *Torah* tells us that we can accept even half at a time. Just do your best, and don't worry about the rest.

Hashem counts our efforts, not necessarily the finished product! May we all continue to bring him nachas ruach.

משל למה הדבר דומה

וידא אהרן ויבן מזבה לפניו ויקרא אהרן ויאמר הן לה' מחר (לג-ל) (א-ג) **משל:** R' Yechezkel Landau z"l, known by his magnum opus "Noda B'Yehudah," was the Chief Rabbi of Prague (1713-1793). He was known for his brilliance, and many times managed to redeem individuals, or sometimes the entire community, from intimate dangers.

Once, he was sitting in his study, which was located in the upper story of his house, completely absorbed in some difficult problems of civil and religious procedure which were sent to him from all over the world.

Suddenly, he heard shouting. As he looked up, he beheld a strange-looking man, armed with an axe. "I heard you are a wonder-rabbi, able to perform miracles," shouted the intruder, "Prove it!" Frightened as the *Noda B'Yehudah* was by the imminent danger, he kept his composure and answered:

"Ok. How would you wish me to prove it?"

"Jump from this window and land unharmed below; if not, I shall kill you as a fraud." R' Yechezkel looked at the invader, "That would be little proof of my wonder-working power, for an acrobat could do it without a miracle; but listen, I will do something more astonishing. I will walk down below and you, remain here and see me come flying up, like a bird, through the window!" The madman thought this a dazzlingly bright idea and consented. R' Yechezkel dashed out, gave the alarm, and the lunatic was apprehended.

משל: When *Aharon Hakohen* was requested to help make the *Eigel Hazahav*, he cleverly consented, or so the people thought. By not completely confronting the issue he was able to push off the calamity a bit longer and almost managed to deter it entirely. There is much to be learned from the actions of *Aharon* on that fateful day.

ויאמר ה' אל משה אשר אל בני ישראל אתם עם קשה ערף ורנע אחד אעלה בקרבך וכליתך (לג-ל) (א-ג)

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

Although the sin of the Golden Calf is one of the worst in Jewish history, when the young and impressionable Nation created an idol, bowed down to it, and even brought sacrifices to it, the *posuk* seems to imply that the main cause of the problem was that the Jewish people are "stiff-necked." Indeed, says the **Alter of Kelm, R' Simcha Zissel zt"l**, this is the main problem! They were inflexible, unable to admit that they made a mistake. This *middah* is the root of all evil for when one is stubborn he will never admit that he made a mistake and will never change!

There is an important message here that we must take to heart. We all make mistakes! Sometimes we even make MAJOR mistakes. But in truth, that is not so terrible if - and it is a big IF - we are able to admit that we made a mistake and apologize sincerely. One might even raise up himself and his relationship to a level it was not at before.

We all know the three most important words in any relationship. Listen carefully and use them often. They are: I WAS WRONG! Just saying, "I am sorry" is not enough. It does not allow one to move on. When one takes responsibility for a mistake, his relationship can then go forward. However, when people are stiff-necked and stubborn, refusing to admit that they are wrong, as in the case of *Bnei Yisroel* by the *Chet Haegel*, it is not the sin that is the problem, but the inability to fix it!

In life, we come across many instances where people clash and there is room for strife. Remember, we ALL make mistakes and sometimes, we do or say things we should not have. That is part of being human. If it happens, it can be rectified. As long as we are willing to be flexible, tolerant and not "stiff-necked," even a sin as terrible as the Golden Calf can be transformed into a "Golden" opportunity to admit that we were wrong and thereby raise ourselves and our relationships to a whole new level!